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# FAMILY DISINTEGRATION AND THE DELIN- QUENT BOY IN THE UNITED STATES

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to present in a summary way a comparative study of family disintegration as related to juvenile delinquency. Several such studies have been made in certain cities or institutions, but very few if any, have investigated the factor of parental and conjugal conditions in any comprehensive fashion. The present study is an attempt, as far as possible, to gather statistical facts, representing the United States as a whole, bearing on the relation of family disintegration to juvenile delinquency.

Although we do not yet have statistics covering the parental conditions of the delinquents in the various state institutions for juveniles in the United States as a whole, the annual report of the reformatory and industrial schools of Great Britain for 1895, contains this information for children in institutions for delinquent boys and girls. In this country, probably the best treatment of the subject up, to the present time, is that of Breckinridge and Abbott, which is a comprehensive study of the home conditions of boys and girls brought into the juvenile court in Chicago.<sup>2</sup> The work covers the statistics of the court on the subject for ten years and presents in addition a case study of several hundred delinquent boys and girls. A somewhat similar, but statistically less intensive, study was made on the West Side, New York City, and published by the Russell Sage Foundation in 1914.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Healy, director of the Psychopathic Institute in connection with the Juvenile Court of Cook County, published in 1915 his treatise on *The Individual Delinquent*, which is probably the most scientific work we now have on the causes of juvenile delinquency. In this work, Dr. Healy points out the high correlation of defective home conditions with delinquency.<sup>4</sup> Probably two other studies deserve mention. As early as 1897, D. W. Morrison published an interpretation of English statistics on parental conditions of delinquents.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*The Delinquent Child and the Home* (1912), Russell Sage Foundation

<sup>3</sup>*Boyhood and Lawlessness* (1914), Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>4</sup>*The Individual Delinquent* (1915), Wm. Healy, p. 149.

<sup>5</sup>*Juvenile Offenders* (1897), D. W. Morrison.

One of the first case studies of juvenile delinquency was that made in 1907 by a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy at the University of Chicago.<sup>6</sup> The Whittier Scale for Grading Home Conditions, which is somewhat analogous to the Binet-Simon Test in field of mentality is being developed by the Whittier State School.<sup>7</sup>

#### METHOD AND MATERIALS

Our purpose was not to obtain statistics which would cover the entire juvenile delinquent population in the United States, but, as far as possible, to obtain statistics which would be representative of the various states. Accordingly, from a list of the institutions for juvenile delinquents in the various states, those institutions which were the principal industrial schools or reformatories for boys were selected and a letter addressed to the superintendent of each institution.<sup>8</sup> Wherever there was doubt as to which was the principal institution for delinquent boys, the request for information was sent to both schools. Fifty-five letters were forwarded to the various institutions in the forty-eight states and the District of Columbia. Where the information was inadequate, or the first address referred us to another institution, it was necessary to send additional requests.

The general letter requested information for the preceding year on the following points: (1) Parental Conditions of Boys at Time of Commitment, (2) Nativity of Parents, (3) Age at Time of Commitment, (4) Per Cent of Boys Coming from Cities of Over 25,000 Population. Of these four points, it seems advisable for several reasons to limit the present paper to the first and the last. The results of the tabulation of the information on the other two points will be presented at some future time. The writer then hopes to include a paper covering the same facts for delinquent girls in the United States and to present a comparison of the statistics for boys and girls.

Within two weeks, replies had been received from the majority of the north central and eastern states. In general, the superintendents were very courteous in furnishing the desired information, notwithstanding that in some cases it required considerable clerical work, especially where the annual report had not been prepared or published. Of the forty-nine possible returns (forty-eight states and the District of Columbia), thirty-seven were represented among the replies received. Of these thirty-seven, nine stated either that they had no

<sup>6</sup>A Case Study of Delinquent Boys (1907), Mabel Carter Rhoades.

<sup>7</sup>See *Journal of Delinquency* (Nov., 1916, pp. 273-86). (Published at the Whittier State School, Whittier, California.)

<sup>8</sup>A complete list of these institutions is published each year in the proceedings of the National Prison Association.

statistics covering parental conditions or that they had no state institution for juvenile delinquents.<sup>9</sup> For five states not replying, the desired information was secured from earlier reports of the state institutions.

Responses to our inquiry reveal considerable differences among the states of the Union as to the progress they have made in dealing with the delinquent problem among children.

The following states have no statistics, nor has any reply to our inquiry for information been received from them:

Maryland, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas and New Mexico.

The following states replied stating that they have no statistics bearing upon the subject of our inquiry:

Connecticut, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Arizona, Nevada, Washington and South Dakota.

The following made no reply, but we were able to secure statistical data from old reports from these states:

Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Colorado.

The following states replied and furnished statistical data:

Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Oregon and California.

As a result of our search for information concerning the disintegration of the families of juvenile delinquents, we have thirty-two out of a possible forty-nine states represented.<sup>10</sup> The number of delinquents reported for each state in the tables should not be considered as representative of the number of delinquents in the states, as the information in some cases covers a period of two years, and in other cases, less than a year. However, the total study represents 7,598 delinquents from the various parts of the nation and may be considered to be representative of the eastern, northern, and western states, for the consideration of causative or correlative factors.

The term "parental condition" as used in this study has reference only to whether the parents are living together, or are separated by divorce, desertion, separation, death, insanity, imprisonment or commitment to an institution, but does not consider the other

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<sup>9</sup>Mississippi is the only state not having such an institution, but the reply states that one is being constructed.

<sup>10</sup>The state industrial school of Illinois located at St. Charles replied, giving percentages, but not as to detailed factors, so that Illinois is included in the number, but is not represented in the tables. *Video* footnote (b) to Table No. 1.

facts such as intemperance, mental defects, crime, disease, etc. Where the parents are living together, we apply the term "normal parental condition;" where the parents are not living together, we apply the term "abnormal parental condition."

We shall now take up first, the interpretation of the information furnished on the parental conditions of the delinquent boys in the various states, and second, a discussion of the facts relating to the percentage of delinquents coming from cities.

#### THE DELINQUENT BOY AND BROKEN HOMES

The family is an institution. As such it may be said to have both a structure and a function. The structure is composed of a father, mother, and children. Within the family, we have more or less constant interaction, both psychical and physical, between the different members. On the other hand, we also have the constant interaction between the family as a whole or of the individual members with the community.

From the viewpoint of the community, the function of the family is primarily that of reproduction and the training of the child in the "mores" of the group. The failure of the child to adjust himself to the "mores" of the group, brands him as a delinquent. Society places the responsibility, for this adjustment of the child to the "mores," upon the family. Accordingly, if this structure (the family) is made defective in any manner, we must expect that the functioning process will be impaired, resulting in probable imperfect adjustment of the child to the "mores"—juvenile delinquents.

It is in this sense that, in this paper, we use the term "defective family," meaning thereby that the normal structure of the family has been interfered with by the loss of a father or mother, or both, through death, divorce, separation, desertion, insanity, or imprisonment. Where such defect in the structure exists we shall also speak of such a family as a broken home or a "crippled" family, it being rendered thereby incapable of functioning properly.

While it is the function of the family as an institution to train the child in the "mores," there are a number of forces tending to prevent proper adjustment to the "mores" and to render the child delinquent. Where the family structure becomes defective, we then may have the weakening of opposition to, and the accentuation of, these forces which are antagonistic to proper social conduct. To such situations, we shall apply the term "family disintegration," and speak of it as a factor or force in juvenile delinquency.

The following table indicates the parental conditions of 7,598

juvenile delinquents covered by this study. The reader should understand that this paper is entirely a statistical study and as such is subject to the limitations and errors to which all statistical studies are subject. Any interpretations and conclusions, therefore, should be considered with these limitations in mind.

TABLE I

PARENTAL CONDITIONS OF DELINQUENT BOYS IN STATE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.  
TOTALS FOR THIRTY-ONE STATES (a)

Parental Condition	Number of Delinquents	Per Cent of Distribution
Parents living together (b).....	3,663	48.2
Mother dead .....	975	12.8
Father dead .....	1,362	17.9
Total one parent dead.....	2,337	30.7
Both parents dead.....	429	5.7
Parents divorced, separated or deserted.....	802	10.6(c)
Other abnormal (d).....	280	3.7
Unknown .....	87	1.1
Total .....	7,598	100.0
Total Normal (d).....	3,663	48.2
Total Abnormal .....	3,848	50.7(e)
Unknown .....	87	1.1
Total .....	7,598	100.0
Having step-mother .....	197	5.2
Having step-father .....	334	8.9
Total having one step-parent.....	531	14.1(f)

(a)Includes only 41 girls (Montana). The states are: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Montana, Oregon, and California.

(b)Includes all cases not included under other headings. If report accounted only for those where parents were dead or separated, the remainder were assumed to be living together.

(c)Percentage based on 7,598 delinquents. Nine states failed to report on divorce, so that actually this percentage should be based on the delinquents reported by the twenty-two states, making 802 out of 5,856, or 13.7%.

(d)Normal—two parents living together; Abnormal—parents not living or not living together.

(e)Illinois not included. The letter does not give detailed information, but states 80% abnormal due to: death, divorce, and separation of parents. It is not known whether this is an estimate or actual per cent. The total number of boys was 722, making 572 or 80% abnormal and 150 or 20% normal. This included in our grand totals would make the total abnormal 4,420 or 53.1%.

(f) These cases were included under one parent dead, or divorced. Only twelve states kept statistics on step-parents. Therefore these percentages are based on the 3,753 delinquents reported by the twelve states.

Over one-half of the boys in state industrial schools in the United States come from broken homes. However, there is reason to believe that this is a considerable understatement of the facts as revealed by the contrast of statistics taken from records and those gathered by actual case investigation.

The study made by Breckinridge and Abbott included the statistics of the Cook County Juvenile Court on these points for ten years (1899-1909) and in addition a case study of 584 boys for the year 1903-04. The total abnormal or broken homes for the period of ten years, according to court records, was 12.2% less than the actual probable percentage as brought out by individual case study. Records taken at institutions are probably not as accurate or carefully kept as those taken from case studies. Consequently it may not be far fetched to assume that our 50.7% is probably low and that the actual percentage would be something like sixty per cent. This would mean, generalizing, that six out of every ten boys whom society brands as delinquent and has confined to a state institution for such persons, have lost one or both parents.

The following table is a summary of the tables of the most recent and important studies on this subject of the parental conditions of juvenile delinquents. The three studies are those of: Dr. Healy, covering one thousand repeaters among juvenile delinquents, in the Cook County Juvenile Court; Breckinridge and Abbott, covering the cases referred to above; and the study made by the Russell Sage Foundation on the West Side, New York City, and published as "Boyhood and Lawlessness."

TABLE II  
SHOWING COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES OF PARENTAL CONDITIONS OF JUVENILE  
DELINQUENTS IN THREE PREVIOUS STUDIES MADE IN CITIES

Parental Conditions	Breckinridge and Abbott(a) 10 Years	Breckinridge and Abbott(b) Case Study	West Side New York City(c)	Healy (d) 1,000 Repeaters
	%	%	%	%
Parents living together....	66.1	56.7	57.1	50.2
Father dead .....	13.6	19.9	22.7	8.7
Mother dead .....	8.9	9.8	8.6	15.4
Both parents dead.....	3.1	4.3	5.2	5.7
Parents separated(e).....	4.9	7.6	6.4	20.0
Other abnormal(f).....	.5	1.7	..	..
Not reported .....	2.9	..	..	..
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Total abnormal .....	31.0	43.3	42.9	49.8
Total apparently normal...	66.1	56.7	57.1	50.2
Not reported .....	2.9	..	..	..
	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0

(a) *The Delinquent Child and the Home* (1912), p. 91, covers entire number of boys passing through the Cook County Juvenile Court, 1899-1909.

(b) *Ibid.*, p. 91. Covers case study of 584 boys in the Cook County Juvenile Court in the year 1903-04.

(c) *Boyhood and Lawlessness* (1914), Russell Sage Foundation, p. 171. Covers case study of 233 boys coming into the Juvenile Court from West Side, New York City.

(d) *The Individual Delinquent* (1915), Healy, p. 149. Covers 1,000 repeaters, that is, delinquents who have been brought into court a second time. Includes 306 girls.

(e) Includes divorce, separation and desertion. For Healy: 11.4% separation, and 8.7% desertion.

(f) In prison, insane, etc.

While the percentage for the total abnormal in these studies is somewhat lower than those in Table I, this is probably due to the fact that the delinquents studied are almost exclusively from the city. This difference between the city and the country will be discussed in the next section in connection with Table IV. The study made by Dr. Healy shows some irregularities in the percentages in comparison with the other studies, but it should be remembered that this study included 306 girls and also that all were repeaters. However, it should be noted that all of these studies bear out the relative high percentage of defective family conditions among juvenile delinquents as indicated by Table I.

It should also be noted that these boys, of whom a large per cent are without a father or a mother, or both, are probably the worst class of our delinquent children. It is only as a last resort that boys are sent to the state institution after all other means have failed. As a rule only after the persuasion of parents, friends, and relatives, has failed, after probation has been tried, and all other means of reform abandoned, is the child finally sent to a reform school.

An excellent test of this matter would be information as to the home conditions of our hardened criminals when they were young and in the making. Fortunately we have some evidence of this sort, as a result of a questionnaire sent out by the Philadelphia Juvenile Court and Probation Association, to the inmates of state penitentiaries in the United States.<sup>11</sup> One of the questions asked sought information as to the parental condition before the age of sixteen years. Mrs. Schoff, ex-president of the association, in writing of

<sup>11</sup>Pamphlet issued by the Philadelphia Juvenile Court and Probation Association.



the result of the questionnaire, states that almost half of the convicts replying, had lost either one or both parents before they were sixteen years of age. This means by death only, so that a safe assumption would be that one-half of those replying to the question had lost one or both parents by death, insanity, divorce, separation, desertion, etc.

#### ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES COMPARED

Let us now compare our totals for the various states in this country with the totals for Scotland and England.

TABLE III

COMPARING PERCENTAGES OF DELINQUENT BOYS FROM BROKEN HOMES IN ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES (a)

Parental Condition	—England and Scotland—		—United States—	
	Number of Delinquents	% of Distribution	Number of Delinquents	% of Distribution
Parents living together (b)....	1,383	44.5	3,663	48.2
Mother dead .....	534	17.2	975	12.8
Father dead .....	535	17.3	1,362	17.9
Both parents dead.....	130	4.2	429	5.7
Divorce, desertion, etc.(c)....	125	4.0	802	10.6
Other abnormal(c).....	402	12.8	280	3.7
Parental condition unknown...	..	..	87	1.1
Total .....	3,109	100.0	7,598	100.0
Total normal .....	1,383	44.5	3,663	48.2
Total abnormal(d) .....	1,726	55.5	3,848	50.7
Unknown .....	..	..	87	1.1
Total .....	3,109	100.0	7,598	100.0

(a) Figures for England and Scotland are taken from the Forty-ninth Report for Reformatory and Industrial Schools of Great Britain, 1895. These statistics are twenty years old, but they are the best obtainable at present and should be valuable for general comparison purposes.

(b) The English statistics give figures for the abnormal only—remainder of the boys were assumed to have normal parental conditions.

(c) English statistics do not mention divorce, but desertion only. Illegitimacy and parents destitute or criminal are grouped under other abnormal.

(d) For definition, *vide* note (b) to Table I.

The table shows evidence of the fact that in England and Scotland as well as in this country does the breaking up of the family go hand in hand with delinquency. While the statistics will not bear a detailed comparison, due to different situations and conditions in the two countries, yet in general there is a fairly close identity in the distribution of the most comparable items: Parents living together, mother dead, father dead, both parents dead. Because of different standards and methods of recording in England, the last two items in the table are not comparable.

With these facts relative to defective families and juvenile delinquency, let us consider what should be the proportion of delinquent boys coming from "crippled" families if family disintegration were not a contributing factor to delinquency.

In order to treat this relation of family disintegration to juvenile delinquency, in any final and conclusive manner and to present actual statistical evidence of the correlation, it would be necessary that we also should have the same statistical facts, which we now have for boys in industrial schools, for all of the boys in the total population. First, it would be necessary that we know the total number of boys in the population, whose ages fall within the same limits as those of the boys committed to industrial schools. Second, we should know what per cent of this particular part of the boy population would fall under the various parental conditions, were we to classify them as we have the boys of the industrial schools. Third, we should know the periods in the life of both the industrial school boys and the boys of total population during which the family disintegration took place.

With these facts we should then be able, more or less accurately, to correlate parental conditions of boys with juvenile delinquency, by comparing the proportion of boys in the industrial schools having certain normal or abnormal parental conditions, with the proportion of the same group of boys in the total population falling within the same classification.

However, we have no statistics showing exactly how many children in the United States have lost one or both parents. Such statistics would be valuable for many purposes, and in this particular case would give us a basis for pointing out the actual weight of the loss of parents in the process of producing delinquents. In the face of this, it becomes necessary to resort to estimates which are always unsatisfactory for definite conclusions.

#### ESTIMATES OF PARENTAL CONDITIONS OF TOTAL CHILD POPULATION

Rough estimates concerning the same facts as to parental conditions of the total child population of the United States are as follows: Children having one parent not living, 16% ; children having lost parent by divorce, separation and desertion, 3.3% ; orphans and other abnormal, 6% ; total having abnormal parental conditions, 25.3%<sup>12</sup> While these estimates are very rough and unsatisfactory

<sup>12</sup>These estimates are reached in the following manner. The per cent of children having one parent not living, might be roughly the per cent which the widowed form of the total child bearing population. Assuming that the married, widowed, and divorced produce all of our children, the widowed compose 11.4% of the child-bearing population (U. S. Census, 1910, Vol. 1, p. 509). Since the death of one of the married couple stops reproduction, the size of the family

for definite and exact conclusions, yet they are, undoubtedly, very conservative in view of the fact that a case study of the parental conditions of 688 non-delinquent children,<sup>13</sup> made in Portland, Oregon, shows that only 19% come from disrupted homes as compared with 25.3% according to our estimates for the United States as a whole.

Accordingly, if there are twenty-five out of every hundred children in the United States, who have lost one or both parents, we should expect only twenty-five per cent (25.3%) of the juvenile delinquents to come from such homes.

However, we find that of 7,598 boys in industrial schools in the various states of the United States, there is one out of every two boys (50.7%) who were without one or both parents at the time of their commitment to an institution for reform. In other words, we must conclude that while not more than one out of every four boys in the United States are without one or both parents, these defective families furnish fifty per cent or one-half of the delinquents in our industrial schools.

#### DELINQUENCY AND FAMILY DISINTEGRATION: URBAN V. RURAL STATES

We have seen that the broken or defective family is closely related to juvenile delinquency both in this country and in England, and that

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of the widowed, generally speaking, will fall below the average, while the number of children produced by the couples still living together will have a cumulative effect upon the percentage of children whose parents are still living. On this account, without going further, we may safely reduce the estimate to 8% instead of 11.4%. But we also must not overlook the fact that each person included in the number given as married (according to the Census) represents only half of a reproduction unit, while the widows and widowers each represent a whole unit or family. Consequently, in order to obtain the approximate per cent of children who are members of widowed families, we should double the above per cent, making 16%. This would mean that one out of every six children has lost one parent by death. While admittedly a very rough estimate, this is certainly conservative.

For divorce, separation and desertion, the approximate per cent of children who are affected by this type of family disintegration is 3.3%. This estimate is based upon the per cent of divorces among the married population. For the United States as a whole, the proportion of divorces to marriages is 1 to 12 (Report of Census on Marriage and Divorce, 1887-1906, p. 45). According to the Census, two out of every five divorces affect children (*ibid.*, p. 27). Assuming that the number of children in families where divorces are granted is the same as among normal families (although it would undoubtedly be less) we arrive at an estimate of 3.3% as the total proportion of children in the population affected by divorce.

A fair estimate of the number of orphans and of the number of children having lost one parent through other abnormal conditions (that is, insanity, imprisonment, etc.) would not be more than twice the number of children affected by divorce. Consequently, we may estimate it to be 6%. Adding these estimates, we have 25.3% as the estimate of the number of children in the population having broken homes.

<sup>13</sup>Study of 657 delinquent children and 688 non-delinquent children in Portland, Oregon, made by Bessie Nelson, Reed College, Portland, Oregon.

there is reason to believe that it is a contributing factor to delinquency. However, it is not intended for a moment to conclude from these facts that the defective family is the only factor making for delinquency, or that in these cases where we have defective families there are not also other contributing factors working along with family disintegration. In fact, if we find that in communities where we have reason to believe that contributing factors other than family disintegration are very strong, the percentage of delinquents coming from broken homes is smaller than in communities where other factors are probably less strong, our interpretation that the defective family is a primary factor, will be strengthened, not weakened. In such a case, we will simply be isolating family disintegration as a factor or force in producing delinquency, from other contributing factors. To the degree that we can isolate this factor from the maze of others, to that degree can we be certain of its existence as a factor.

While space does not permit of the presentation of the complete tabulation of the statistics for all states, the comparison of the urban with the rural states may be profitable. If urban life adds or strengthens forces tending to make boys delinquent, which do not obtain in rural and village districts, then we would expect to find a lower per cent (not number) of delinquent boys from defective families in the industrial schools of urban states or communities. On the other hand, if urban life does not contribute or strengthen the factors other than family disintegration, we shall expect (other things being equal) a larger per cent (not number) of boys coming from broken homes in urban state institutions, since family disintegration is greater in the urban than in the rural and village districts.<sup>14</sup>

TABLE IV  
COMPARISON OF PERCENTAGES OF DELINQUENTS IN STATE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS FOR BOYS FROM STATES OF LESS THAN THIRTY PER CENT URBAN POPULATION WITH STATES OF OVER SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT URBAN POPULATION AND CITIES

States Having Over 75% Urban Population (a)	Per Cent Urban (b)	Per Cent of Delinquents from Defective Families
Massachusetts .....	92.8	31.4
New York .....	78.8	42.6
Rhode Island .....	96.7	34.8
District of Columbia.....	100.0	45.9
New Jersey .....	75.2	53.0
Average for group.....	88.7	41.5

<sup>14</sup>Marriage and Divorce Bulletin No. 96: 1887-1906 p. 22 (U. S. Census Report), 1914.

States Having Not Over 30% Urban Population (a)		
Wyoming .....	29.6	64.2
Nebraska .....	26.1	57.3
Kentucky .....	24.3	53.1
Kansas .....	29.2	69.3
Idaho .....	21.5	55.1
Alabama .....	17.3	77.5
North Dakota .....	11.0	45.7
Oklahoma .....	19.3	50.0
Louisiana .....	30.0	56.1
<hr/>		
Average for group.....	23.1	58.7
Large Cities(c)		
Chicago .....	100.0	35.1
New York .....	100.0	31.9
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Average for cities.....	100.0	33.5

(a) States for which we have statistics on the parental conditions of delinquent boys in their state industrial schools. There are several other states which would fall within each of these groups, but we do not have the statistics concerning the delinquent boys in those states.

(b) Statistical Abstract, 1915, p. 39. Urban population "comprises that residing in cities and other incorporated places of 2,500 inhabitants or more . . ."

(c) Annual Report of the Cook County Juvenile Court, 1915; Report of the Children's Court (New York), 1913, p. 78. Covers all delinquents passing through the court. These statistics are not altogether comparable with those of industrial schools, but the comparison is presented for what it is worth. The latter are probably a more hardened class of delinquents.

While there seems to be no close relation between population and the per cent of delinquents from broken homes when individual states are compared, yet when strictly urban states as a group are compared with strictly rural states as a group, apparently the percentage of delinquent boys coming from homes affected by family disintegration is in inverse proportion to the percentage of urban population.<sup>15</sup> That is, in strictly rural states, the per cent of delinquents coming from defective families is highest, while the per cent from urban states is conspicuously less than the per cent from the rural states. Where there is a still greater urban population, that is, in entirely urban communities, we find that the per cent of family disintegration among delinquents is less than in the urban states. Should we take into consideration, the fact that the death rate and the divorce rate are much greater in urban states and cities than in the rural states,

<sup>15</sup>The other states which are neither strictly urban or rural, do not appear to show any close relation between per cent of urban population and percentage of delinquents from defective families. This is apparent only by using extremes. The variation of other contributing factors probably obscures this inverse proportion in all intermediate cases.

this inverse proportion of percentage of delinquents from defective families with the percentage of urban population, would appear more conspicuous than it does in the table above.

The fact that in the more urban communities, we have a relatively small per cent of boys coming to industrial schools from broken homes, shows not that the effect of family disintegration is lessened in proportion to the increase of urban population, but that in the urban communities, we probably have new or strengthened factors entering in, which makes boys delinquent regardless of normal family conditions in the home. Evidently such other contributing forces are absent or less strong in the less urban or more rural communities or states, and consequently a large per cent of the delinquent boys coming to industrial schools in the more rural states are the victims of delinquency, more largely due to the lack of a father or mother, or both. The effect of the "crippled" family as making for delinquency is no less strong in the city than in the less urban community, but the number of boys made delinquent by other forces in the urban community, lowers the per cent (not the number) of delinquents coming from "crippled" families.

In passing, as another test of this principle, we may notice the situation in England and Scotland, according to the statistics for those countries. The following table divides the totals given in Table II according to the respective percentage of delinquents in England and Scotland in comparison with the density of population of the two countries.

	Persons Per Square Mile	Per cent of Delinquents from Defective Families
Scotland .....	156.5	67.3%
England .....	618.0	51.5%

Again we find that the district which is more largely urban contributing a far smaller per cent (not number) of delinquents coming from broken homes. Scotland with its less urban population, has 15.9% more delinquent boys from defective families than does England with its highly urban population.

#### MOTHERLESS AND FATHERLESS BOYS WHO ARE DELINQUENT

For the 7,598 juvenile delinquents covered by the reports of the various state industrial schools,<sup>16</sup> we find that 975 or 12.8% come from homes without a mother. The tabulation of this information also shows that 17.9%, or, approximately one out of every six of these

<sup>16</sup>Vide footnote to Table I.

delinquent boys had no father at the time of commitment to reformatory institution. As stated before we have no statistics giving the per cent of motherless and fatherless children in the total child population of the United States with which to correlate these facts. However, conservative estimates places the per cent of motherless and fatherless children at not more than 16%.<sup>17</sup> According to the census of 1910, the ratio of widows to widowers in the United States is 15.1:6.4.<sup>18</sup> From these statistics we may estimate the proportion of motherless to fatherless children in the United States to be 6.4:15.1, or, approximately, 2:5. If then, the total motherless and fatherless children form 16% of the total child population, it appears that the respective percentages of motherless and fatherless children would be roughly 5% and 11%.

If we accept these estimates, which appear to be very conservative, we find that while approximately one boy out of every twenty in the United States has lost his mother by death, one boy out of every eight in the industrial schools has lost his mother. The odds against the boy without the influence of a mother apparently are tremendous. We might expect that it will be difficult for an industrial school to supply in the boy's life that which is lacking, due to the care of a mother. Indeed, as pointed out before, we find evidence that these delinquent boys who come from defective families, form the larger part of our most hardened and difficult cases. The death of the mother means or may mean one of several things: The placing of the child in an institution; the hiring of a woman to care for the house and children; if over ten years of age, possibly the leaving of the child to care for itself during the day; or the widower may remarry bringing a step-mother. All of these or any of them, do not remove the defect in the original family structure, nor insure its proper functioning.

<sup>17</sup>Vide footnote 12, page 717 f.

<sup>18</sup>The per cent of widowers among the total male married (includes all married, widowed or divorced) population over fifteen years of age, is 6.4%. The same percentage for widows is 15.1%. For purposes of a rough estimate, we may assume the married, widowed, and divorced to comprise the total child-bearing population. Since there is no reason to believe that there will be any great difference in the size of families where the mother dies than where the father dies, and since there would be as many childless families among the widows as widowers, we may estimate the proportion of motherless children to fatherless children in the country as 6.4%: 15.1% or approximately 2:5. The question as to whether more widowers than widows remarry may be raised here. However, since it is debatable whether the difference is so great as to appreciably affect our point, it is not considered in the estimate. Even were it true that a larger per cent of the widowers than widows remarry the difference would not be so great as appreciably to alter this proportion. Above percentages are taken from the Abstract of Census, 1910, p. 147.

Contrasting the motherless to the fatherless boys in state industrial schools, we find that the boy having lost his father is far more numerous than the motherless boy (17.9%:12.8%). Several students of this subject have pointed out very clearly the relatively large per cent of boys in these institutions who have lost their father as compared to those who have lost their mother. Breckinridge and Abbott in their interpretation of these facts for the city of Chicago use this as the basis for the statement that evidently the strong right arm of the father is more effective than the gentle influence of the mother. That a third again as many of the delinquent boys have no father as have no mother, seemed quite conclusive that the father's influence was the greater of the two in reference to the boy's conduct. This however, so far as statistics are concerned, is very doubtful.

The fallacy of this and other interpretations of similar results in local studies, lies in the fact that no attempt has been made to ascertain whether there is not the same disproportionate number of fatherless children in the total child population. In a preceding paragraph, we noted that although we have no exact figures on this subject, there is reason to believe that the fatherless children far exceed the motherless children in numbers in the total child population, estimates placing the ratio as high as 5:2.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, if the loss of the father were of no effect whatever as far as delinquency is concerned, we should expect to find a much greater per cent of the boys in these institutions for the delinquents who had lost their father than who had lost their mother. In fact, so great is the large proportion of fatherless children as compared to the motherless in the total population, it is evident that there are relatively more motherless than fatherless boys in industrial schools. This being the case, we might conclude by using the same method of argument which former students have, that since there are only twelve (12.8%) motherless boys as contrasted to seventeen (17.9%) fatherless boys in institutions for delinquents (or, in other words, about two to three) the mother's influence is considerably stronger in the boy's life than is the father's influence, so far as the boy's social conduct is concerned.

The economic explanation put forth by those who have heretofore interpreted these statistics, to the effect that the father's influence is the stronger, when closely examined, also proves a boomerang. This argument really strengthens the point that the loss of a mother has a greater correlation with delinquency than does the loss of the

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<sup>19</sup>*Supra* footnote 18, page 722.



father. When a boy loses his mother, he does not encounter the great economic pressure as is the case where he loses his father. The father is able to provide for the motherless boy, while at the death of his father, either the boy or his mother must make the living. Consequently as far as the economic factor affects the boy's social conduct, we should expect more fatherless boys than motherless boys to become delinquent. Notwithstanding this, we have reason to believe that the motherless boys form a *relatively* larger proportion of our delinquents in industrial schools than do the fatherless boys. Moreover, the fact that at the loss of the father the boy partially loses his mother also, since she must go to work, and yet relatively not as many fatherless boys become delinquent, reinforces the conclusion that the mother is the stronger factor of control in the boy's life.

If this is the case, the situation is more hopeful than it would be, were the facts reversed, for undoubtedly the larger part of our children who have only one parent living are those who have mothers only. By a promotion of such movements as that for the Mothers' Pension, we can hope partially to remedy the economic factor which takes the mother from the home and from the proper care of her children.

#### BOYS WHO ARE BOTH ORPHANS AND DELINQUENTS

One would surmise that boys who have neither father or mother living and have been thrown entirely out of their natural home environment, form a large part of the industrial school population. Contrary to this, orphans form a small per cent of the number of boys in our state institutions for the reform of children.

Space does not permit of a detailed comparison of the percentages of orphans in the various state institutions. In general the percentages range from 0% in Kansas and Maine to 23.4% in Alabama, the latter high percentage probably being due to the conditions peculiar to the large colored population of the South. The per cent of orphans among delinquents in the cities of Chicago and New York is 3.5% and 1.6%<sup>20</sup> respectively, as contrasted with 5.7% of the total for thirty states. It would be of great help in understanding these percentages should we have information as to the number of orphans in the total population. The per cent of orphans among the total child population is probably low, and the placing of a large per cent of orphans in other kinds of institutions in undoubtedly the explanation of the low percentage.

<sup>20</sup>Per cent of boys who were orphans passing through juvenile courts during one year—New York Annual Report, 1913; Chicago Annual Report, 1915.

Taking these facts into consideration, it is quite fair to infer that although the per cent of orphans in industrial schools is very low, it is high relative to the number of orphans in the child population.

The percentage for large cities corresponds in general to the lower percentage in all parental factors in the cities. The extreme difference, however, between the percentage for the total for all states reporting and that of cities probably needs further explanation than the principle pointed out in the first part of this paper contrasting urban and rural communities as to statistics on parental conditions.<sup>21</sup> In large cities, we have numerous organizations and institutions for orphaned children and consequently the child is placed in one of these institutions while young. It follows that a large per cent of the orphans in the cities would be in other than institutions for the delinquent.

#### THE DELINQUENT BOY AND UNBROKEN HOMES

The number and percentage opposite the heading—Total Normal—in Table No. I<sup>22</sup> corresponds to the number and per cent of those boys in state industrial schools who at the time of their commitment had both father and mother living and as far as is known from the information, are living together. In other words, these boys come from unbroken homes. Almost one-half, 48.2%, of the delinquent boys have had the care of both a father and a mother. It should be remembered, however, as pointed out earlier in this paper, that individual case studies of delinquent boys lower this percentage considerably and that the failure of some institutions to make any records of facts concerning broken homes other than those broken by death, make it highly probable that some of these boys classed under normal home conditions come from homes broken by divorce, insanity, etc.

If we consider that from forty to fifty per cent of the boys have both parents living together, we have evidence of the enormous strength of factors other than family disintegration. Some one has said that some boys would be better off without parents than the ones they now have. This is undoubtedly true. The amount of drunkenness, immorality, and criminality among the parents of many delinquent boys, as brought out by local and individual studies, makes the home in many cases as unfavorable and the family as imperfect for proper functioning in adjusting the offspring to the "mores" as does the loss of a parent or both parents by death.

<sup>21</sup>*Vide supra*, pages 718-721.

<sup>22</sup>If only percentages covering abnormal cases were given, the remaining percentages were tabulated as normal. Where record was not kept as to boys from divorced families, such cases would be included under normal.

The same percentages covering parental conditions for delinquents passing through the juvenile courts of Chicago and New York<sup>23</sup> are 64.4% and 68.5%, respectively, as compared to the 48.2% for the total for the various states as shown in Table No. 1. However, the case studies made in each of these cities lower this percentage to 56.7% for Chicago and 57.1% for New York.<sup>24</sup> In other words, in large cities over half of the delinquents come from families which are normal as far as the loss of parents is concerned. This again points out the fact that there are probably additional factors contributing to delinquency in the city, which are either weak or lacking in the less urban districts.

#### THE DELINQUENT BOY AND DIVORCED PARENTS

Of the total number of state institutions from which information was secured, twenty-two,<sup>25</sup> or two-thirds, kept statistics with reference to the separation or divorce of parents of their boys at the time of commitment. According to these replies, 802, or 13.7%, of 5,856 boys in these state industrial schools came from families "crippled" by divorce, separation, and desertion.<sup>26</sup> Space again does not permit the presentation of the complete tabulation and a detailed comparison of the percentages for all of these states. However, in general we may say that, with certain exceptions, it appears that the per cent of boys from families affected by divorce, separation, and desertion, varies with the divorce rate or the number of children affected by divorce in those states.

If we were to ask the question as to whether the number of children in the total population of children who have lost parents by divorce, separation and desertion, are furnishing more than their proportion of the delinquents in the industrial schools, we again have no census of the total number of such children in any one state, or, for the United States as a whole, for any one year. However, the census does provide us with a basis for an estimate. In a series of estimates (*supra* p. 717) we found the per cent of children who have been

<sup>23</sup>Chicago Report for 1915, p. 35; and New York Report, 1913, p. 78. Attention is again called to the fact that these statistics are for all juvenile delinquents passing through the courts; those for states are for state industrial schools.

<sup>24</sup>*Supra*, Table II.

<sup>25</sup>New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Oregon, and California.

<sup>26</sup>Table I makes this 10.6%. This variation is due to the fact that the totals for this table include nine states which failed to keep statistics on divorce.

affected by divorce, in the total child population, to be 3.3%. Another estimate based on the statistics of the Census Marriage and Divorce Bulletin makes this proportion 2.2%.<sup>27</sup> It may be fair, then, to assume that the per cent of children in the total child population who have been affected by divorce is between 2% and 4%.

Apparently about three (2% to 4%) out of every hundred boys are affected by divorce, separation and desertion, while more than thirteen (13.7%) out of every hundred boys in our reform schools come from such families. This extremely high correlation of divorce, separation and desertion means that these disintegrated families furnish four or five times their proportion of the industrial school population of the United States. This fact should not be surprising, since the disintegrating forces that break up the home are also contributing to the delinquency of the children. The fact that there is trouble and dissension between the parents means that the child is brought up in an atmosphere which is conducive to delinquency, a fact which is probably not true of any large per cent of the cases where the father or mother dies. So that a boy who comes from a home which was such that it was broken through the dissension of the father and mother, has relatively less encouragement toward a proper adjustment to the "mores" than has the boy who loses his parent by death. For in the case of one parent being dead, during the time that the parent was in the home, there is more probability of proper parental care of the children than in the case where the parent was lost through dissension within the family.

#### THE DELINQUENT BOY AND STEP-PARENTS

Only twelve state industrial schools furnished information as to the number of boys who had step-parents at the time of commitment.<sup>28</sup> Of the 3,753 delinquent boys reported by these institutions,

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<sup>27</sup>The Census Bulletin on Marriage and Divorce No. 96, published in 1914, page 99, provides us with the number of children who were affected by divorce during a total of twenty years, 1887-1906. In order to be conservative and to make allowance for additional children losing parents by separation and desertion, let us assume that the number of children who have been affected by these factors in the year 1910 was not more than was the number of those affected by divorce during the whole twenty years, 1887-1906. The total number of children affected by divorce during these twenty years was 637,800. The total number of children under fifteen years of age in the United States in 1910 was 29,499,136 (Federal Statistics of Children, Part I, 1914, p. 10). Thus we arrive at an estimate of 2.2%.

<sup>28</sup>Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kentucky, Colorado, and California.

531, or 14.1% had either a step-father or a step-mother when they were taken from the home and placed in the industrial school. Of these, 5.2% had step-mothers and 8.9% had step-fathers. These facts give us no basis for estimating the effects of the step-parents upon the social conduct of the boys. There is no evidence as to whether the step-parent is preventive or conducive to delinquency. That one-seventh (14.1%) of the delinquent boys had a step-parent at the time it was found necessary that they be sent to an industrial school, makes it questionable whether the introduction of a step-parent is, to any great extent, effective in overcoming the delinquency of the boy.

The prevalence of delinquent boys having step-fathers, as compared to those having step-mothers may be interpreted by some to mean that the substitution for the natural mother is more helpful to the boy, from the viewpoint of his social conduct, than is the substitution for the natural father. However, a more likely explanation is that there are probably more boys with step-fathers in the total child population. It is to be noticed that the ratio of boys having step-fathers to those having step-mothers (8.9% to 5.2%) is not greatly different from the ratio between fatherless and motherless boys in these institutions (17.9% to 12.8%). Another suggestion contrary to the above mentioned interpretation on this comparison is the theory of students of the family that the male's relation to the offspring is more or less secondary to his affection for his mate. If we should accept this theory, the substitution for the natural father would appear to be far less injurious to the structure and functioning process of the family, than would be the substitution for the natural mother.

#### JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: CITIES VS. LESS URBAN DISTRICTS

In reply to the request for the percentage of delinquents from cities of over 25,000 population, sixteen state institutions gave information on this point, four of these stating that there were no cities in those states having 25,000 population.<sup>29</sup>

The following table shows the percentages of delinquents who were committed from cities of over 25,000 population to twelve state industrial schools, comparing this percentage with the per cent of the total population living in cities of over 25,000 population in the corresponding states.

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<sup>29</sup>Vermont, South Dakota, Nevada, and Arizona.

TABLE V

SHOWING THE EXCESSIVE PROPORTION OF DELINQUENT BOYS IN STATE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS FROM CITIES OF OVER 25,000 POPULATION

State	Per Cent of Delinquent Boys from Cities <sup>30</sup>	Per Cent of City Population in State
New Jersey .....	91.6	80.4
Ohio .....	65.3	62.1
Illinois .....	66.2	67.4
Wisconsin .....	58.0	25.3
Iowa .....	46.2	14.8
Nebraska .....	52.0	16.2
Kansas .....	34.4	13.8
Virginia .....	34.2	14.1
West Virginia .....	13.7	8.5
Utah .....	65.0	31.0
Oregon .....	25.0	30.1
California .....	49.4	45.0

A recent article in the *Journal of Delinquency*<sup>31</sup> concludes that for one state, the villages rather than the cities furnish the larger proportionate share of delinquents. This conclusion is based on a study of the population of a state industrial school. The inconclusiveness of such facts for purposes of generalization is due to the fact that the large cities send only a part of their institutional delinquents to the state industrial school, since the cities have institutions of their own for delinquent children. In Chicago for the year 1915, only 54.3% of all delinquent boys, actually committed to some institution, were committed to the state industrial school, while 45.7% were distributed among four other institutions for such children.<sup>32</sup> Obviously the statistics of state institutions might show evidence favorable to large cities, when some cities do not send to the state industrial school many more than half of the boys committed to institutions.

Notwithstanding this fact, the above table shows that of twelve state industrial schools, all, except two, show a larger percentage of delinquent boys from cities, in proportion to the city population in the whole state. The Illinois percentage shows that the cities lack less than two per cent of their proportionate share in the state in-

<sup>30</sup>Meaning by city places of over 25,000 population, according to the Census of 1910. A number of replies gave the figures based on counties having cities of this size. In these cases the total population of such counties was used in figuring the percentage of city population in the state.

<sup>31</sup>March, 1917, pp. 74-91: *Delinquency and Density of Population*, by Williams.

<sup>32</sup>Annual Report of Cook County Juvenile Court (Chicago), 1915, p. 40.

dustrial school, notwithstanding the fact that there are many other municipal and county institutions to which delinquent boys are committed in that state. The other exception, Oregon, is probably explained by the same situation, Portland furnishing the entire twenty-five per cent of the delinquents to the state industrial school. The central rural states, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa show the greatest relative percentage of delinquents from cities, the proportion being three times the proportion of population living in city districts. In view of the relatively greater number handled through probation in the city, such facts indicate the multiplication of contributing factors to delinquency in the city.

#### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the facts which have been brought out by this study:

1. Out of 7,598 juvenile delinquents<sup>33</sup> in industrial schools in thirty-one states, 50.7% came from "crippled" families.<sup>34</sup> According to our estimates, the proportion of children in such families in the total population of the country is not over 25.3%.

2. Contrasting a group of strictly urban states with a group of strictly rural states, there appears to be an inverse ratio between the proportion of delinquent boys in state industrial schools coming from "crippled" families, and the proportion of urban population in the corresponding states.

3. Twelve and eight-tenths per cent, or, approximately, one in eight of the delinquent boys in state industrial schools of thirty-one states, had no mothers living at the time of their commitment.

Seventeen and nine-tenths per cent, or, approximately, one in six of these delinquent boys in state industrial schools, of thirty-one states, were fatherless at the time they were sent to an institution for reform.

4. The proportion of fatherless boys to motherless boys in these industrial schools is 17.9:12.8, or, roughly, 3:2. An estimate of the proportion of fatherless boys to motherless boys in the total child population is 15.1:6.4, or, roughly, 5:2.

5. Thirty and one-tenth per cent, or about one out of every three boys in these state industrial schools, have lost either their father or mother by death. Our estimate places the per cent of such children having lost one parent by death, in the total population of the United States, at 16.0%, or one out of six.

<sup>33</sup>Includes only 44 girls—Montana.

<sup>34</sup>For definitions of terms such as crippled, defective and disintegrated families, *vide supra*, pages 712 and 718; for parental conditions, abnormal and normal home and families, *vide supra*, pages 713 ff.

6. Of the 7,598 delinquent boys in these industrial schools 5.7% were also orphans.

7. Eight hundred and two or 13.7% of 5,856 delinquent boys in twenty-two state industrial schools, came from families "crippled" by divorce, separation and desertion. According to estimates, two to four per cent of the total child population have been affected by divorce, separation and desertion.

8. Of the delinquent boys in the industrial schools of twelve states, 5.2% had step-mothers and 8.9% had step-fathers at the time they were sent to an institution for reform.

9. Of twelve state industrial schools, ten show a larger proportion of delinquents from cities of over 25,000 population than the proportion of the city population would justify.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Attention is again called to the inadequacy of the census information concerning children to enable us to arrive at such conclusions as would be possible had we more detailed facts concerning the child population of the United States. For correlating purposes, it has been necessary to rely entirely upon a series of estimates concerning the parental condition of the total child population, which estimates are always unsatisfactory for anything like definite deductions from our information concerning delinquent boys in state industrial schools.

In arriving at any conclusions concerning juvenile delinquency, it should be kept in mind that this is entirely a statistical study and that, as pointed out before, it is subject to the limitations to which all purely statistical studies are subject. With these limitations in mind, the following conclusions seem to be warranted from our survey of the information received from thirty-one state industrial schools:

1. Family disintegration shows a high correlation with juvenile delinquency (25.3%:50.7%, or,  $\frac{1}{4}:\frac{1}{2}$ ). This, as far as the child is concerned, is to be expected, since the functioning process of the family has been rendered defective.

2. The apparent inverse ratio between the percentage of delinquent boys from "crippled" families, and the percentage of urban population points toward a multiplication of contributing factors to delinquency in the urban districts.

3. That the loss of a father is more injurious to the boy (from the viewpoint of his social conduct) than is the loss of a mother, is not certain and even doubtful.

4. Boys who have lost one parent by death constitute twice their proportion of the delinquents in industrial schools.



5. Families "crippled" by divorce, separation and desertion, furnish four to five times their proportion of the boys committed to industrial schools. This type of the disintegrated family correlates higher with delinquency than any other classed as "abnormal."<sup>35</sup>

6. Compared to the total village and rural population, the cities furnish an excessive proportion of the delinquents to state industrial schools.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this investigation, the following recommendations are made:

1. Local studies of the correlation of family disintegration and juvenile delinquency should be made. These studies should be intensive and the generalities and estimates used in this study avoided.

2. Information of value for the study of child welfare problems should be given more emphasis in all census enumerations. Whether a child is without a father or mother may be more important, from the viewpoint of society, than information concerning the nativity of the child's parents.

3. There is need for a special study providing facts showing the ages at which juvenile delinquents are affected by family disintegration, comparing these with the same facts for the whole child population. Such a study, with the statistics covering the parental conditions of children in the United States, would permit definite conclusions on the subject of family disintegration and juvenile delinquency.

4. Institutions for delinquent children should adopt a uniform and comprehensive schedule for recording facts concerning the history and previous environmental conditions of boys and girls committed to them. This could be undertaken through any or all of the following agencies: National Conference of Charities and Correction; American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology; National Prison Association and National Probation Association.

5. The Mothers' Pension Movement should be encouraged.

6. A great deal of emphasis is being given to the study of the divorce problem. More attention should be concentrated on the welfare of children affected by divorce.

7. School courses and literature on the study of the family as an institution, should be introduced generally throughout the United States, looking toward an adequate understanding of the family as an institution and toward building up of family integrity.